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3 October 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Recent Statements on the Soviet ABM System
and Communist China's ICBM Program

1. Reporting on yesterday's closed Senate discussions regarding proposed appropriations for the US Sentinel ABM system, New York Times columnist John W. Finney paraphrased Senator John Sherman Cooper as follows:

a. "He (Senator Cooper) believed that the information (obtained in briefings by the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency) demonstrated that neither the Chinese missile threat nor the Soviet missile defense system presented as great a threat as postulated ... earlier this year...."

b. On the Soviet ABM system: "... Senator Cooper said intelligence information showed that the Soviet Union was not moving as rapidly as had been expected in deploying such a system."

c. On Communist China's ICBM program: "Because of delays in the Chinese missile program, Senator Cooper said ..., it now appears, on the basis of the latest intelligence estimates that Communist China will have fewer than ten inter-continental missiles by the mid-1970s." (Finney added that "The actual number given in the current intelligence estimates, it was learned, is four or five missiles.")

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2. Following are extracts from national estimates and recent congressional briefings which deal with the Soviet ABM and Chinese ICBM programs.

The Soviet ABM System

a. NIE 11-3-67, 9 Nov 1967, TSRT, pp 2-3.

"Construction of antiballistic missile (ABM) defenses around Moscow has continued during the past year, and we believe that they will become partially operational sometime in 1968. A full operational capability for all 96 launchers now apparently planned for the system will probably not be reached until 1971. Our analysis indicates that this ABM system will furnish a limited defense of the Moscow area, but that it has some apparent weaknesses.

"We have no evidence of ABM deployment outside the Moscow area, and it seems unlikely that the Soviets have yet decided upon a comprehensive system for national missile defense. We have no evidence of any wholly new ABM system in development, and think it more likely that the Soviets will develop an improved version of the Moscow system, which could probably begin to enter operational service as early as 1971-1972."

b. DCI Defense Appropriations Briefing, 14 September 1968, pp 21-22.

"The Soviet antiballistic missile system around Moscow now has a limited operational capability. Three ABM launch sites near Moscow became operational shortly before mid-1968.

"The early pattern of construction indicated that the completed system would have a total of 128 launchers at eight launch complexes forming a ring around Moscow. It now appears that only four complexes with 64 launchers will be completed.

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"We believe that the Soviets cut back the Moscow ABM deployment plan because they recognized that the system cannot cope adequately with present or prospective American attack systems.

"The system should be complete in mid-1970."

c. The same account of the Soviet ABM system was given in DCI Briefing for Rivers Subcommittee, 25 September 1968, pp 25-26.

Communist China's ICBM Program

a. SNIE 13-10-68, 19 September 1968, pg 6.

"We believe the Chinese will not be able to deploy a large force of ICBMs in the first few years. By this we mean that by the end of the first three years of deployment they could probably achieve a force of somewhere between ten and twenty operational ICBM launchers. Hence, assuming the earliest possible initial operational capability (IOC) of 1972, the Chinese are not likely to have more than 20 or so ICBMs deployed by 1975. If the Chinese made a maximum effort and were successful, they could conceivably double that number. But we believe the chances for delays and difficulties are high and it would be unrealistic to estimate that the Chinese would reach a force level of 40 or so ICBM launchers by 1975."

b. DCI Defense Appropriations Briefing, 14 September 1968, pp 57-58.

"The (Chinese) ICBM program has apparently encountered a major delay.

"Testing won't start until late this year at the earliest, and ICBMs probably won't reach the field until 1972 or later."

c. The same account of the ICBM program in Communist China was given in DCI Briefing for Rivers Subcommittee, 25 September 1968, pp 58-59.

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<p>Attached for your information is a comparison of comments by Senator Cooper during the debate on the US ABM system, and recent estimates and briefings on the Soviet ABM program and Communist China's ICBM.</p> <div></div>					
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